

Lost Creek Road Bridge
County Road 243
Spanning the Sevier River
2 miles east of Aurora
Sevier County
Utah

HAER No. UT-86

HAER

UTAH

21-AURO, V)

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
LOST CREEK ROAD BRIDGE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Spanning the Sevier River on Lost Creek Road
(County Road 243), two miles east of Aurora,
Sevier County, Utah

Quad: Aurora, Utah 7.5 min scale

UTM: 12/422130mE 4308720mN

Date of Construction: ca. 1935

Present Owner: Sevier County
County Seat, Richfield, Utah

Present Use: Vehicular and pedestrian bridge to be replaced by a
new vehicular and pedestrian bridge. Project date of
removal is fall 1996.

Significance: The Lost Creek Bridge is a timber stringer type,
with cribbed timber abutments.

Historian: Lorna Billat, JBR Environmental Consultants, Inc.,
May 1996

II. HISTORY

A. NEED FOR THE BRIDGE

The town of Aurora is located in a small valley between the Pavant Range and the Sevier Plateau in Sevier County, Utah. It is approximately 14 miles northeast of the town of Richfield and about four miles southwest of Salina. The Sevier River traverses through this valley.

Aurora was settled in 1875 by Mormon pioneers. It began and continues to be a community built on agriculture. The town was originally named Willow Bend because of its location on the Sevier River which was overgrown with willow trees¹. It was changed to Aurora when the town applied for a Post Office in 1881². The first co-op was built by the townspeople in 1884. Before that the community relied on homemade goods or had to travel to other towns to get supplies. In addition, the arable locations for crops and livestock grazing were on both sides of the Sevier River. It became apparent that a means of crossing the river was necessary to access the areas and to transport the crops. In 1896, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad came through the area bringing and distributing goods, and access across the river was necessary to utilize the railroad system³. The town of Aurora was incorporated in 1913⁴.

Following incorporation it appears that the town of Aurora started to flourish somewhat economically. Several businesses including four stores and a cafe were operating in town in 1919. Another store, the Sorensen Mercantile was completed in 1919 as well. A garage and service station were operating in Aurora in 1920 and 1928. Another garage built in 1930, was sold and turned into a grocery store in 1937. Ice cream and candy were sold at the "Sweet Shop" in Aurora, in 1935. A sandwich shop and a cafe were open for business in 1940 and 1946. A barber shop was also in operation starting in the early 1920s. A local builder and contractor in Aurora started a lumber business in 1920.

In 1925 white clay was discovered northwest of town. Western Clay and Metals Company built a mill where the clay was dried, crushed, and bagged. The clay was utilized in refining oil. This provided employment for many living in the community.

Another economic development in the community was the construction of a cheese factory by the Nelson-Ricks Creamery Company in 1928. This provided a strong interest in the dairy business, which conveniently coincided with the agricultural ventures in the area. The construction of

a bridge would greatly benefit the transport of the clay and the dairy products to the railroad⁵.

B. CONSTRUCTION CHRONOLOGY

The first bridge constructed for the town of Aurora was built in the 1880s⁶.

In these early years, territorial and county roads were financed through poll taxes and tolls. Poll taxes required one day of labor or \$1.50 per year from all able-bodied males of a certain age. In 1862, the poll tax law in Utah was changed to two days labor per year or \$1.50 per day in lieu of that⁷. Tolls were instituted to pay for maintenance on wagon roads and keep the necessary structures over streams passable. Knowlton acknowledged "this type of financing {was} very satisfactory for short sections of highway which involve primarily bridges, tunnels, or ferries."⁸

Railroad transportation was available in the area in 1896 when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was constructed through the valley. This cut down on the need for road maintenance between many towns. As a result of the increased utilization of the railroad system, the funding provided by the state for inter-community roads was greatly reduced. Therefore, rural community road maintenance became strictly a county and/or city concern⁹.

The State Road Commission was created in 1909. At that time, Sevier County roads were maintained mostly by the county. Only three small segments of state road were present in Sevier County. In 1912, the Bridge Department of the State Road Commission requested bids and awarded contracts for several small bridges in Sevier County¹⁰.

The economy of Sevier County began and continues to be based on agriculture. In a census of economic activities for 1930, fifty percent of the population was employed in agriculture. Rural roads are an integral part of the agricultural community providing links between the farm fields, settlements, and distribution lines.

In the early to mid-1930s, federal work relief programs provided the labor for numerous engineering projects across the nation. Although unsubstantiated, it is within the realm of possibilities that this bridge was a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) or Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. The suggestion that it could have been a CCC or WPA project was made by Mr. Gaylen Rappeleye, Sevier County Road Supervisor. There is no primary source for this suggestion. There were at least two CCC camps in the Salina area from 1933 through 1939. Although no specific building projects were described for the Aurora area,

bridges were one of the main types of structures built and maintained by the CCC¹¹. The estimated construction date for the Lost Creek Road Bridge is 1935 which falls well within the CCC and WPA activity periods¹².

Road improvements on the Salina-Scipio road which passes through Aurora were noted as commencing in the fall of 1934¹³. A local road contractor, Leland A. Young, was noted as the low bidder on a bridge contract over the Sevier River near Salina in 1934¹⁴. It is possible that either of these construction projects refer to the Lost Creek Road Bridge.

C. LOCATION

The bridge spans the Sevier River along Lost Creek Road (County Road 243) in Sevier County (Figure 1). It is about four miles southwest of Salina, two miles east of the town of Aurora, and east of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad tracks. The bridge provides access to arable lands on both sides of the Sevier River.

III. THE BRIDGE

A. DESCRIPTION

The Lost Creek Road Bridge was built around 1935, an estimate provided by the UDOT structure inventory and appraisal sheet and the Utah Historic Bridge Inventory record¹⁵. It crosses the Sevier River with a span of 33 feet (single span) and is 20 feet wide. The abutments are constructed of notched log cribbing with rock fill. The cribbing is eleven courses high with six timbers running perpendicular to the stringers and five running parallel. Stream cobbles have been placed between timbers for added support. Stringers were used to connect the abutments and comprise the superstructure of the bridge. There are 11 stringers across the 20 foot width. These stringers measure 12 inches by 16 inches indicating the bridge was constructed post-1930¹⁶. The wood deck is laid upon the stringer base. The bridge has two wooden double-rail guardrails flanking either side of it. The rail posts have been bolted to the outer stringers. The rails have been notched into the rail posts and nailed. The wood deck of the bridge has been covered with dirt.

Timber was an ideal construction material for numerous reasons. Wood is an abundant and renewable resource that is relatively easy to procure.

Initial cost and maintenance are lower than that of other, less accessible materials (i.e. steel). Further, a timber bridge can be constructed in any weather and is not damaged by continuous freeze and thaw,¹⁷ an important consideration in Utah. Little skilled labor is necessary to construct a timber bridge.

B. MODIFICATIONS

The bridge deck planks and timber stringers have been replaced periodically which is a normal and required part of maintenance¹⁸. The construction materials and techniques used in this maintenance have been consistent with the original bridge design and workmanship. The log cribbing abutments have not been replaced and are original construction.

C. OWNERSHIP AND FUTURE

The Lost Creek Road Bridge was built, owned, and continues to be maintained by the County of Sevier. Recent study of the bridge indicated limitations in handling projected traffic volumes and loads in the years ahead. It was deemed necessary to replace the bridge in order to handle forthcoming use.

IV. FOOTNOTES

1. Van Cott, John W., Utah Place Names, p. 16.
2. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 112.
3. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 116.
4. The Richfield Reaper, 3 October 1935.
5. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 113-115.
6. The Richfield Reaper, 3 October 1935.
7. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 21.
8. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 23.
9. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 78
10. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 153-155.
11. Baldridge, Kenneth W., Nine Years of Achievement: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Utah, p. 378.
12. Poll, Richard D., Utah's History, p. 487-488.
13. The Richfield Reaper, 16 August 1934.
14. The Richfield Reaper, 31 May 1934.
15. FraserDesign, Utah Historic Bridge Inventory.
16. Axline, Jon, Monuments Above the Water: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956, p. 27.
17. Ou, Fong L. and Clyde Weller, An Overview of Timber Bridges, p. 1.
18. Hughes, Charles E. and Asa S. Nielson, A Cultural/Paleontological Resource Inventory of the Proposed Lost Creek Road Bridge Replacement Project Over the Sevier River Near Aurora, Sevier County, Utah, p. 5.

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B. PERIODICALS

Ou, Fong L., and Clyde Weller, An Overview of Timber Bridges, in Timber Bridges, Transportation Research Record 1053. Washington D.C., Transportation Research Board National Research Council, 1986.

C. NEWSPAPERS

The Richfield Reaper, 31 May 1934.

The Richfield Reaper, 16 August 1934.

The Richfield Reaper, 3 October 1935.

